

McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park



Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



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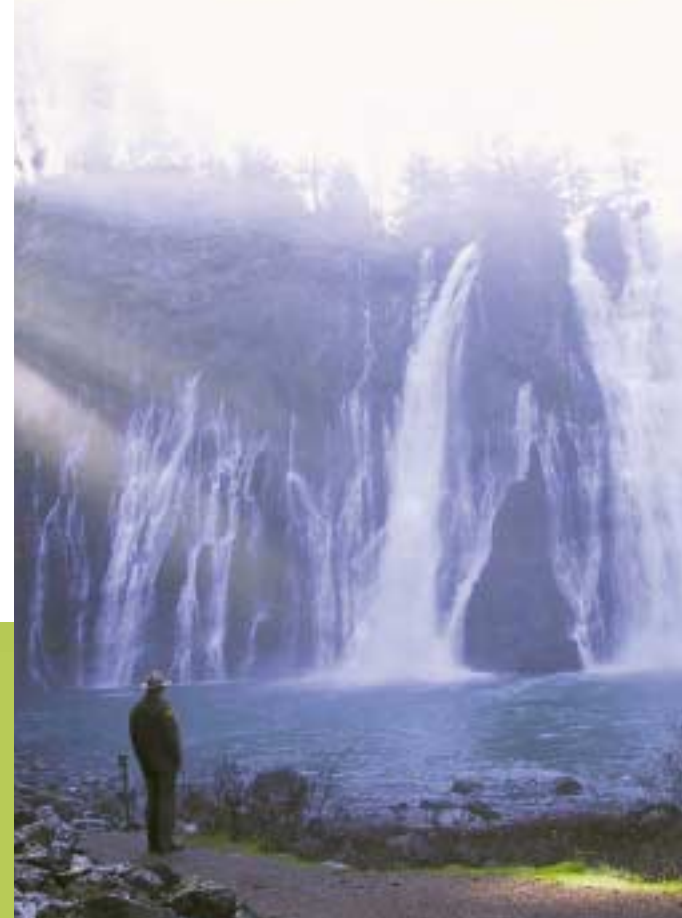
McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park

24898 Hwy. 89

Burney, CA 96013

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*On a visit to the falls,
an enthralled President
Theodore Roosevelt
pronounced them one of
the wonders of the world.*



High on the eastern boundary of the **Cascade Range**, McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park sits on the western Modoc plateau halfway between Mount Shasta and Lassen Peak. The falls' two main cataracts of plunging white water originate from Burney Creek, a tributary of the Pit River. Across the basalt face of the cliff, thousands of rivulets issue through the porous rock from five underground aquifers fed by rain and snowmelt, giving the falls a feathery, enchanted appearance.

On sunny days the mist above the basin of blue water at the bottom of the falls is often alight with rainbow colors. In the fall the pool reflects the rich colors of autumn leaves, while winter often brings a lacy array of tiny icicles to decorate the face of the cliff. On a visit to the falls, an enthralled President Theodore Roosevelt pronounced them one of the wonders of the world.

The climate in this area 65 miles east of Redding is dictated by its predominantly mountainous topography. The park's highest elevation is nearly 3,100 feet. Temperatures range from average lows of 20 degrees in winter to 80 degrees or more

during the drier summer months. Between November and March, rainfall averages nearly 28 inches, with December and January being the wettest. Layered clothing is advised.

PARK HISTORY

For thousands of years, several native groups lived here. The earliest known residents, the Ilmawi people, looked upon the falls as a sacred place. Though there is little evidence of their presence left in the park, it is known that they shared the abundance of this area with other native groups.


Two major subgroups of the people now known as the Pit River Nation—the Atsugewi and the Achumawi—shared a similar culture. The name “Pit” refers to a hunting method in which the hunters dug deep pits to trap such large game animals as antelope, deer and the occasional elk. Salmon and trout were a vital part of the native people's diet. Small game included squirrels, rabbits, ducks, geese, sage hens and quail.

The land also provided an abundance of acorns, bulbs, tubers, seeds and grasses, while medicinal needs were served by various trees, herbs and mosses.

Winter villages, which might be used for as much as six months, often consisted of bark houses or partly subterranean lodges. In warmer weather the people occupied houses built of brush and other light materials. Burney Falls and the sapphire pool at its base are still important to the Pit River people.

Non-Indian encroachment into this peaceful place began as early as the 1820s and '30s, with the influx of fur trappers. In 1843 New Jersey native Pierson B. Reading, destined to become a leading citizen of Shasta County, described the falls in his diary. After the 1846 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the native people's claims on the land were totally ignored. By the mid-1850s, European and American settlers were homesteading their lands.

Though the native groups tried to fight for their rights, their attempts brought about the vengeful destruction by European-Americans of a totally blameless village along Beaver Creek. In 1857 the U.S. Army established Fort Crook as a peacekeeping presence, attracting even more European-



Pit River Indian Women (Achumawi Tribe) circa 1880, James F. Morehead, photographer. Image courtesy of the Meriam Library, CSU Chico



*Drawing of Shaste Peak by Charles Wilkes
Image courtesy of the Meriam Library, CSU Chico*

American settlers. By the time Fort Crook closed in 1867, those Indians who had not died from European-borne diseases, or been moved to the Round Valley Reservation in Mendocino County, were eking out a scarce living as day laborers.

Burney Falls was named after Samuel Burney, a drifter from South Carolina who arrived in the area in November 1858. The following spring Burney was acting as caretaker for Brook Farm, the property of Thomas Preadmore, whose treatment of Indian women had sparked anger among their people. In Preadmore's absence a group of Indians came looking for revenge, and the unfortunate Burney paid for Preadmore's actions with his life. Over time a number of local features came to be named after the luckless wanderer.

John and Catherine McArthur arrived in the 1860s, purchased thousands of acres, and opened a mercantile store in the area. In 1917 the newly formed Pacific Gas and Electric Company began buying up land and water rights in the area. Alarmed residents became concerned that PG&E, in the interests of providing more hydroelectric power, might dam the Pit River and destroy Burney Falls. Frank and Scott McArthur, sons of John and Catherine, purchased 160 acres surrounding the falls, and in 1920 they deeded the property to the State Board of Forestry, requesting only that it be named for their parents.

Over time several family farms and the small settlement of Peck's Bridge sprang up along the Pit River near the falls.

Early pioneer Isaac Ray established a short-lived lumber mill above the falls, but the area's remoteness lasted well into the 1900s. A short hike to the Pioneer Cemetery will bear witness to the beginnings of some of the historic names associated with this part of California.

NATURAL HISTORY

Though the proximity of two inactive volcanoes suggests the origins of the area around Burney Falls,



Photos courtesy of Inn-California.com



Upper Burney Creek is a popular destination for anglers.

this terrain is actually the result of molten lava that came up from underground as the earth's crust moved. Beneath the volcanic rock formations, a chalky white substance—diatomaceous earth—was formed when microscopic plants sank to the bottom of an ancient sea floor. It is believed that some of the oldest rocks in the area may date back as much as 26 million years. Year round about 100 million gallons a day of clear, cold water flow over the ancient, craggy rock face of the falls.

Typical of the rugged, undeveloped north-eastern part of California, wildlife here is abundant. Such spectacles as migratory black swifts darting in and out of the falls to feed their nestlings, or the once-endangered bald

Photos courtesy of Inn-California.com



Talus slope near the falls pool

eagle soaring high overhead are guaranteed to thrill the eye. The park's selection as a viewing site for the Watchable Wildlife program is a testament to its variety of habitats and wildlife.

A vibrant mix of coniferous forest—including ponderosa pine and, along Burney Creek, Douglas fir—provide habitat for such wildlife as western fence lizards, Pacific tree frogs, various woodpeckers, bald eagles and a variety of small mammals.

A mixed hardwood forest—predominantly California black oak and Oregon white oak—and chaparral are home to a wealth of mammals, including California ground squirrels, porcupines, coyotes, gray foxes and the occasional mountain lion. Numerous bird species, such as pileated woodpeckers, chestnut-backed chickadees, peregrine falcons, ospreys and non-native European starlings thrive here.

Montane chaparral is primarily a shrubby habitat, vital to mountain lions on the hunt, since it also provides cover for mule deer, the lion's favorite prey. Small mammals include the brush rabbits and black-tailed jackrabbits that feed on chaparral, and various insects and birds that eat its seeds. This dry habitat has few reptile species.

Wet meadow habitat occurs in any area where the soil becomes incapable of absorbing



Photos courtesy of Inn-California.com

water. The plants that grow here consist mostly of grasses and herbs. Until the land dries enough to accommodate the small rodents that attract such raptors as red-tailed hawks and northern harriers, it is primarily occupied by insects.

Burney Creek represents riparian habitat, a significant resource that attracts American dipppers, western pond turtles, Pacific tree frogs, non-native bullfrogs, river otters and beavers.

RECREATION

Though the park is open year round, its heaviest visitation takes place during summer. Spring and fall, when the weather is often quite enjoyable and the park is less crowded, are excellent times to visit.

Camping

The park has 128 family sites (no hookups) and seven primitive sites. A sanitation station is located near campsite 93. You may make camping reservations up to seven months or as few as 48 hours before you wish to arrive by calling (800) 444-PARK (7275).

Hiking

Five miles of hiking trails wind through evergreen forests, and the Pacific Crest Trail passes

through the park.

Burney Creek Trail—This backcountry trail through a forest of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, incense cedar and a variety of oaks leads to the falls.

Pioneer Cemetery Trail—This hiking, dog-walking and bike-riding trail follows a historic wagon trail to the Pioneer Cemetery.

Fishing

At Burney Creek brook and rainbow trout are abundant in October, after the summer camping season slows down. At Lake Britton trout, bass, bluegill and crappie give anglers a good, sporting workout. Lake Britton is easily reached via the Burney Creek Trail or by vehicle.

Special Events

Heritage Day takes place on the Sunday of Columbus Day weekend, and features demonstrations and recreations of typical activities and crafts of the late 1800s.



Sailboats on Lake Britton

Photo courtesy of Inn-California.com



Peaceful park trail

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

- **Camping**—Seven accessible sites suitable for RVs or tents, including three with electric hook-ups, have paved activity areas, but tent pads are loose dirt. Accessible restrooms and showers are nearby.
- **Trails**—One mile of the Burney Creek Trail is accessible. Trailhead, parking, and drinkable water are at the lake day-use parking area. About one mile of the

Pioneer Cemetery Trail is on firm soil. The trailhead and limited parking are between campsites 75 and 76 in the Pioneer Campground.

- **The Falls**—A generally accessible path leads to the viewing area, though the last 12 feet has slopes up to 12 percent. The exhibit at the falls is accessibly designed. An upper area exhibit is usable. The restroom and route of travel to it are accessible. Designated accessible parking is available.
- **Fishing**—At the Lake Britton marina, a fishing pier and the path of travel to it are accessibly designed.

- **Picnicking**—A shaded picnic table near the fishing area is accessibly designed.
- **Parking**—Three accessible parking spaces, including one that is van accessible, are at Lake Britton. Accessibility is continually improving. For current accessibility details call the park, or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

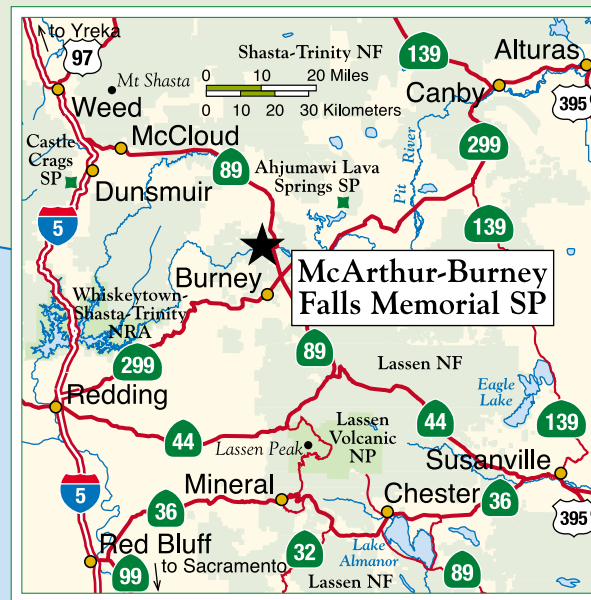
NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Ahjumawi Lava Springs State Park, 3.5 N of McArthur, (530) 335-2777
- Castle Crag State Park, 6 mi. S of Dunsmuir on I-5, (530) 235-2684



Rainbow Footbridge

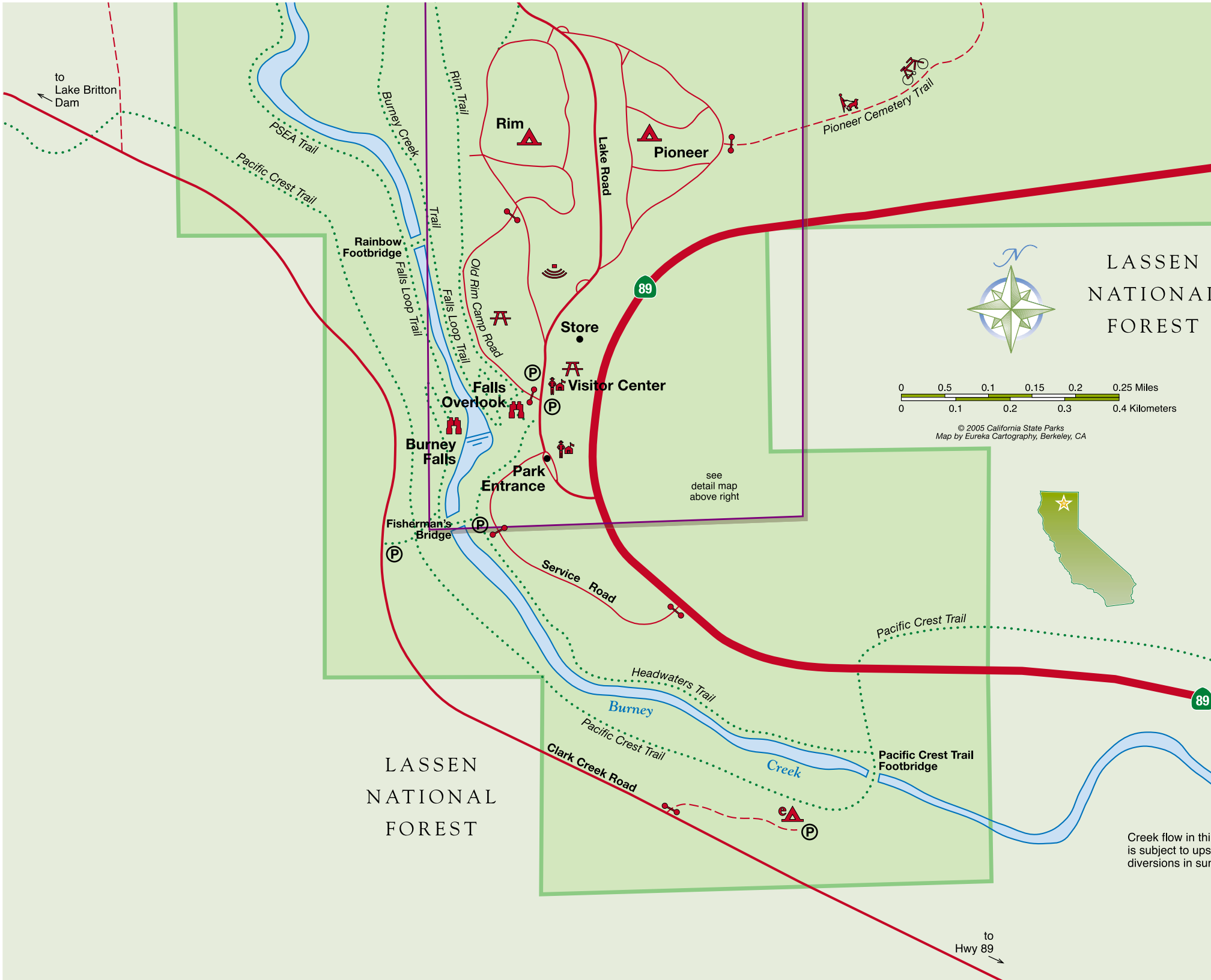
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PLEASE REMEMBER

- It is important for anglers to call the park for the most current fishing regulations before they visit.
- Motorized scooters are not allowed in the park.
- Horses are allowed on the Pacific Crest Trail only.
- Dogs must be on leash (no more than six feet long) at all times and in a tent or vehicle at night. They are permitted on the Pioneer Cemetery Trail and the Old Rim Camp Road, but not on the swim beach.





to Lake Britton Dam

PSEA Trail

Burney Creek

Rim Trail

Rim

Lake Road

Pioneer

Pioneer Cemetery Trail

Rainbow Footbridge

Falls Loop Trail

Old Rim Camp Road

Store

Falls Overlook

Visitor Center

Burney Falls

Park Entrance

Fisherman's Bridge

Service Road

see detail map above right

Headwaters Trail

Burney Creek

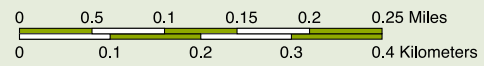
Clark Creek Road

Pacific Crest Trail

Pacific Crest Trail Footbridge



LASSEN NATIONAL FOREST



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Map by Eureka Cartography, Berkeley, CA



LASSEN NATIONAL FOREST

Creek flow in this area is subject to ups and downs and diversions in summer

to Hwy 89

